

DoD INFLUENZA SURVEILLANCE PROGRAM

PATIENT INFORMATION SHEET

What Is the Flu?

Influenza, also known as the flu, is a contagious disease that is caused by the influenza virus. It attacks the respiratory tract in humans (nose, throat, and lungs). The flu is different from a cold. Influenza usually comes on suddenly and you may have the following:

- Fever
- Headache
- Tiredness (can be extreme)
- Dry cough
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Body aches

These symptoms are usually referred to as "flu-like symptoms." Influenza in the U.S. usually occurs during the months of October to April, the "flu season".



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Do Not Give Aspirin To a Child or Teenager Who Has the Flu

Never give aspirin to children or teenagers who have flu-like symptoms – and particularly fever – without first speaking to your doctor. Giving aspirin to children and teenagers who have influenza can cause a rare but serious illness called Reye's syndrome. Children or teenagers with the flu should get plenty of rest, drink lots of liquids, and take medicines that contain *no aspirin* to relieve symptoms.

Sources: The majority of this handout is from the CDC's Influenza Information Sheet found at <http://www.cdc.gov/ncidod/diseases/flu/fluinfo.htm>.

Contact: For how the flu surveillance program works at your facility, contact your clinic or hospital's public health office:

[Place Sticker Here]

The DoD Influenza Surveillance Program



HOW YOU CAN HELP PREVENT THE FLU

(Inside front)

Who Can Get the Flu?

Anyone can get the flu (even healthy people). Millions of people in the United States get the flu each year; about 114,000 are admitted to the hospital and about 36,000 die from influenza. You are most likely to have problems from the flu if you are 65 years of age or older, have a chronic medical condition, or if you are a very young child. Problems from the flu can include having pneumonia, bronchitis, and sinus and ear infections. If you already have a medical condition, having the flu can make it worse. The best example of this is asthma, which can get worse with the flu, sometimes triggering an attack.

How Do You Get the Flu?

The flu is spread, or transmitted, when a person who has the flu coughs, sneezes, or speaks and sends flu virus into the air, and other people breathe in the virus. The virus enters the nose, throat, or lungs of a person and begins to multiply, making you sneeze, cough, and making your nose stuffy. Influenza may also be spread when a person touches a surface that has flu viruses on it – a door handle, for instance – and then touches his or her nose or mouth.

A person can spread the flu starting 1 day before he or she feels sick. Adults can continue to pass the flu virus to others for another 3 to 7 days after symptoms start. Children can pass the virus for longer than 7 days.

Symptoms start 1 to 4 days after the virus enters the body. Some persons can have the flu, but not feel or look sick. During this time, those persons can still spread the virus to others.



1918 Flu Patient

How Do We Prevent the Flu? We need your help!

There are two ways the DoD Global Influenza Surveillance Program can help prevent the flu: by testing people who might have the flu, and by making sure the flu vaccine protects against the flu.

By taking samples from patients who have flu-like illnesses, we can find out what viruses are being spread in the community. If many of the viruses are influenza viruses, we can start an aggressive vaccination program to stop others from getting ill.

Viruses like the flu virus grow more slowly in the lab than in your body, so the results we get from your sample probably won't

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help you personally get over your illness. Getting tested may not help you directly, but ***it definitely helps your community and your country.***

Every year there is a new flu vaccine. The viruses that make up the vaccine are based on the viruses that are collected the previous year by U.S. and worldwide influenza surveillance programs. The US Department of Defense is an important part of that network because we are stationed and travel to hundreds of countries every year, where we can come into contact with all sorts of diseases, including flu. *The specimen you contribute today could affect next year's flu vaccine!*

Last, but not least: **Wash Your Hands!** Every time you touch a doorknob, handle, water fountain button etc., you come into contact with common sources of germ spread. So keep your hands clean and you can stay well.

What You Should Do If You Get the Flu

- Rest
- Drink plenty of liquids
- Avoid using alcohol and tobacco
- Take medication to relieve the symptoms of flu

Influenza is caused by a virus, so antibiotics (like penicillin) don't work to cure it. The best way to prevent the flu is to get an influenza vaccine (flu shot) each fall, before flu season.